

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 307182
ORIGIN HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
AID-05 OMB-01 L-03 /045 R

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-----009943 241103Z /23

R 240320Z DEC 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION GENEVA

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE TEMPORARY ASYLUM CENTER FOR INDOCHINESE
REFUGEES.

REFS: (A) SINGAPORE 5617 (B) SINGAPORE 5475

1. DEPT IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED BY FAILURE OF UNHCR TO
PROCEED VIGOROUSLY TO EXPLOIT POSSIBLE OPENING BY PRIME
MINISTER LEE ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF BOAT REFUGEES FOR
TEMPORARY ASYLUM IN SINGAPORE. AS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY
NOTED, WE SEE THIS AS A KEY ELEMENT IN GETTING SHIPMASTERS
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PAGE 02 STATE 307182

TO PICK UP REFUGEES IN DISTRESS AT SEA. IT IS INCOMPRE-
HENSIBLE THAT UNHCR WOULD NOT ALSO SEE THIS AS A PROJECT OF
MAJOR IMPORTANCE IN LIGHT OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE
UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE THAT THE HIGH COMMISSIONER RENEW
AND STRENGTHEN HIS EFFORTS TO ASSIST INDOCHINESE REFUGEES.

2. PRIME MINISTER LEE WAS CLEAR IN OFFERING TO ACCEPT

GUARANTEES BY THE UNHCR OF ONWARD RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES GIVEN TEMPORARY ASYLUM STATUS IN SINGAPORE. THIS WAS A MAJOR CHANGE FROM SINGAPORE'S PREVIOUS REQUIREMENT OF SPECIFIC PRIOR NATIONAL GUARANTEES FOR EACH REFUGEE LANDED.

3. LEE IS, OF COURSE, QUITE AWARE THAT RESPECTING FINANCIAL

SUPPORT UNHCR CAN GUARANTEE FUNDING OF CENTER AND CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF REFUGEES, AND RESPECTING PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT, THE UNHCR'S BEST EFFORTS ONLY. THESE ASSURANCES, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE PUT FORTH FIRMLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY BY THE UNHCR - WE BELIEVE BY HARTLING HIMSELF IN A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER. HESITANT REMARKS SUCH AS THOSE BY SAMPATKUMAR THAT HE COULD ONLY SAY THAT THE UNHCR HAS RESETTLED SUCH REFUGEES SO FAR (REFTEL) OBVIOUSLY WON'T GET THE JOB DONE.

4. DEPARTMENT ENDORSES EMBASSY SINGAPORE'S RECOMMENDATION THAT UNHCR BE URGED TO SEND TO SINGAPORE FOR DIRECT TALKS A SENIOR OFFICIAL WITH SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY AND EXPERTISE TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION THE SINGAPOREANS ARE ASKING. RESPECTING REF B, PARA 4, DEPT DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT US OFFICIAL RESOURCES BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN CONSTRUCTION OR REHABILITATION OF SITE WHEN IT IS CHOSEN SINCE THAT WOULD TEND TO IDENTIFY THE CENTER AS A U.S. RESPONSIBILITY AND ULTIMATE RESETTLEMENT OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 307182

REFUGEES THERE AS AN OBLIGATION OF THE U.S.

5. GENEVA. REQUEST AMBASSADOR TAKE UP THIS SUBJECT WITH NEW HCR AT FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO STRESS OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE FAILURE OF UNHCR TO PRESS THIS PROJECT AND URGE HIS PERSONAL ATTENTION AS A FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS. ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN IS EXPECTED- TO VISIT SINGAPORE IN EARLY JANUARY AND, IF UNHCR ASSURANCES ON THESE POINTS HAVE BEEN EXTENDED BY THAT TIME, SHE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOS OR WHAT FURTHER STEPS MIGHT BE REQUIRED.

6. FOR USUN. AS OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF, REQUEST MISSION EXPRESS TO SECRETARY GENERAL OUR CONTINUING CONCERN FOR THE FATE OF REFUGEES ESCAPING BY BOAT AND OUR HOPE THAT THE UNHCR WILL BE ABLE TO PROCEED PROMPTLY IN IMPLEMENTING THE SINGAPORE TEMPORARY ASYLUM CENTER PROJECT. IN APSENCE OF SECRETARY GENERAL MISSION SHOULD INITIALLY EXPRESS OUR CONCERN TO THE SECRETARIAT STAFF AT A SENIOR LEVEL. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL ASYLUM, REFUGEE CAMPS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE307182
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: SCLOWMAN:LGS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770481-0230
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771218/aaaaaonj.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 126b0efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 131135
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SINGAPORE TEMPORARY ASYLUM CENTER FOR INDOCHINESE
TAGS: SREF
To: GENEVA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/126b0efd-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009